Ineke Phaf-Rheinberger

Myths of Early Modernity: Historical and Contemporary Narratives on Brazil and Angola[1]

In this paper I will argue that for the cultural history of *Slavery and the Rise of the Atlantic System* (Solow 1991), studying *The Lettered City* (Rama 1996), by the Uruguayan critic Ángel Rama, is very useful. Rama's basic idea was to link the colonial period to the process of independence and modern democratization in the republics of Latin America. According to his argument, the lettered city is a main agency and a cultural reference board for illustrating the complexity of this development from a long-term perspective. The colonial "dream of an order" dating back to European expansion overseas designed a spatial mapping that maintains its impact until today. Such an organization delivers a framework for reading social hierarchies and tensions against which the differential philosophies can be laid out. This lettered city includes everything written and otherwise made visual.

For this lot of material evidence of the lettered city and its ideas on the rise of the Atlantic system, the work of the Dutch poet and philosopher Caspar Barlaeus – or Caspar van Baerle, who lived from 1584 to 1648 – might serve as a paradigm. In the context of their work on slavery and the slave trade in the so-called Dutch period, Barlaeus is familiar as Barléu to Brazilian historians. Barlaeus's volume *Rerum per octennium in Brasilia* (1647), regularly consulted in Brazilian research, described the maritime route between Brazil and Africa, and with special emphasis on Angola. In *O trato dos viventes* (Trade in Humans, 2000) about the formation of Brazil in the South Atlantic in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Luiz Felipe de Alencastro resumes Barlaeus's position by pointing to his premonitions concerning the Christian "justice" of trading humans. Barlaeus is thus seen as

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questioning this trade, and I will analyze Barlaeus's treatise in the first part of this essay. Having thereby provided a background, I will compare his vision with its critical projection in three recent narratives by Angolan and Brazilian authors on this same subject.

1. The Dream of an Order laid out by Caspar Barlaeus

Although the slave trade is not a main concern in Rama's *The Lettered City*, it must be noticed that he repeatedly refers to the presence of African languages in America. His point of departure, however, is the insertion of the lettered city into a European network of mercantile relationships, within which the urban settlements overseas functioned as agents of the empire's "dream of an order". Rama's central point emphasizes the effect of long-term continuities and stressing the role of the city founded by Europeans from colonial times. Its three overlapping hemispheres – the ordered city, the city of letters, and the city of protocols – offered colonizers a center for their administration and defense, which obeys the

> same regulating principles as the checkerboard: unity, planning, and rigorous order reflecting a social hierarchy [...]. Circular plans perhaps conveyed even more precisely than square ones the social hierarchy desired by the planners, with governing authority located at the center and the living spaces assigned to respective social strata radiating from the center in concentric circles (Rama 1996: 5).

The principles of this physical mapping and the distribution of space find their echo in writing from the sixteenth century and succeed in creating an autonomous space from the imposed norms:

> While the lettered city operated by preference in a field of signifiers, constituting an autonomous system, the city of social realities operated in a field of people, actions, and objects provisionally isolated from the letrados' chains of logical and grammatical signification [...]. This labyrinth of signs is the work of the letrados, or collectively, the achievement of the city of letters. Only the letrados could envision an urban ideal before its realization as a city of stone and mortar, then maintain that ideal after the construction of the city, preserving their idealized vision in a constant struggle with the material modifications introduced by the daily life of the city's ordinary inhabitants (Rama 1996: 27-28).

In accordance with Rama's view, the methodical planning of this idealized vision was carried out in the New World empires, whose

> spirit [did not stem] merely from the need to build cities, of course, although cities were its privileged settings, the artificial enclaves in which the autonomous system of symbolic knowledge could function most efficaciously (Rama 1996: 10).

He equally comments that this symbolic knowledge in Latin America was connected through major or minor ties with cities all over Europe:

> [...] even though Madrid, Lisbon and Seville were located above the apex of this structure, [...] practically nobody ruminated that, at least in economic terms, other European cities like Genoa or Amsterdam might stand higher still (Rama 1996: 14).

These economic terms are the result of the link between European colonization and the expansion of consumer society throughout the network of urban trade. Gustavo Remedi (1997) even says that Rama inspired a new model of mapping cities, taking their spatial environment as a democratic project, the city as a "myth of modernity" in mercantile and military globalization, into account. Rama does that by connecting the different layers according to a scope that shapes an urban grammar, a ritual that constantly is challenging the colonial dream with reality and is revealed in the letrados' works. For them, when reflecting on the slave trade within the framework of this urban modernity, they concentrated on a port city, of course, which was the doorway to the transatlantic circuit as well as, until far into the twentieth century, provided the link between the global world and the hinterland.

Caspar Barlaeus belongs to this letrado-group for his mapping of the social hierarchies and the tensions in the realm of the South Atlantic trade. He lived in Amsterdam as success waned for the Dutch East and West India Company. His volume *Rerum per octennium in Brasilia* (Barlaeus 1647) was written there and fulfills all the conditions to offer the best vision of the European "dream of an order" in the foundational period of modern Europe. The author describes the development of the Dutch West India Company from 1621, the year of its official start, in reference to the Dutch conquest of parts of northeast Brazil as well as of the West African Coast – São Jorge de Mina, Luanda, São Tomé – from the Portuguese. He pays special attention to the government of Count Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen in Brazil from 1637 to 1644 because, after the count's return to the Netherlands, Barlaeus, who had never been in Brazil, was invited to write the

report on van Nassau's successes. The book was presented as a real multimedia show because it contained poetry and prose (by Barlaeus), as well as abundant visual material such as maps, city views, sea views, and images of battles and fortress constructions mostly from the hand of the painter Frans Post (1612-1680).

The familiarity of Brazilian historians with Barlaeus's volume does not come as a surprise. Cláudio Brandão, commissioned by the Ministry of Education, translated the Latin text into Portuguese in 1940, and this translation has been reprinted several times in a facsimile edition until, finally, it came out with all the original illustrations in 1980. In *Innocence Abroad. The Dutch Imagination and the New World, 1570-1670* (2001), Benjamin Schmidt remarks that perhaps "no figure lent more prestige to the literary project of America than the esteemed humanist, Caspar Barlaeus, and certainly no work did more to celebrate the tropical feats of Johan Maurits than Barlaeus's *Rerum per octennium in Brasilia*" (1647: 254-255). Schmidt continues calling the book "a monumental work", a "princely volume in every sense", and possibly "the outstanding work overall of seventeenth-century Dutch geography". The *Rerum per octennium* was published at a particularly strategic moment, one year before the Treaty of Münster/Peace of Westphalia finally was confirmed in 1648, and Barlaeus must have been well aware of the terms for the upcoming agreement. It brought not only the end of the Thirty Years War in Germany but also peace with Spain and European-wide diplomatic recognition of the Seven United Provinces. Portugal, meanwhile, was at war with Spain, and the Brazilian case was most difficult to handle. According to the Brazilian historian Evaldo Cabral de Mello, Brazil was seen as a business deal between the various European partners, about which the definitive decision only would be taken in 1669 after long years of hard negotiations. The title of Mello's book, *O negócio do Brasil* (1998), is a quotation taken from a letter of the Portuguese ambassador Francisco de Sousa Coutinho, stationed in The Hague from 1643 to 1650. Mello provides information about the overall interest of the Dutch *grauw* (ordinary people) in the question of Northeast Brazil. The West India Company's investments in those years were open to small stockholders and therefore closely followed at all levels of the population. This explains the publication of anonymous pamphlets such as *De Brasilsche Breede-Byl* (Byl 1647),

in which two servants accompanying their masters for business in Brazil discuss the current situation there.

In this context Barlaeus responds to what Rama offers as the adoption of American surroundings to European merchant conditions, whose greatest desire is the perfect "dream of an order" as the condition for proper investments. City life, thus, was important in Barlaeus's vision. Living in Amsterdam since 1631 profoundly influenced his philosophical discourse. During this period of rapid economic expansion, a ring of canals, the *grachtengordel*, was constructed and this experience of urban innovation considerably determines Barlaeus's view of the world. It even makes him, according to historian Johan Huizinga, "in many senses one of the most complete representatives of the civilization" in the Dutch seventeenth century (Huizinga 1998: 79). However, Barlaeus's book on Brazil did not hold Huizinga's attention. (Did he read the 1923 translation into Dutch?) This is different for Brazilian historians, as we have mentioned before, but research in Brazil does not merely copy Barlaeus's opinions; rather, it questions the philosopher's state of mind. Alencastro (2000: 211, 355), for instance, explores various crucial aspects of Barlaeus's philosophy. In his section on the war for slave markets, he quotes from an initial report by Johan Maurits sent to Amsterdam in 1638, in which the count summarizes a few necessities in the following practical format: colonists with European capital + soil and tropical agricultural technology + African workers. As governor he warns the administrators of the West India Company that scruples against this truth are useless. Furthermore, Alencastro recalls Barlaeus's cautious deliberations on the slave trade and on slavery in general. Via his manuscript Barlaeus complains that

> The desire for profit has grown stronger even among us Christians who embraced the pure teachings of the reformed church while we engaged in arms and warfare. In so doing we have returned to the custom of buying and selling human beings created in God's likeness, saved by Christ, the Lord of Creation, who least of all presents an image of slavery due to a lack of natural ingenuity (Barlaeus 1647: 185).[2]

2 Note: All the translations from Latin in this essay are done by Blanche Ebeling-Koning, whose translation of Barlaeus's volume into English is in process.
Nunc, postquam invaluit etiam inter purioris & in melius mutatae Fidei Christianos lucri cupiditas, aperiente viam bello & armis, rediimus & nos ad morem

Barlaeus continues enhancing his own argument with rhetorical questions and remarks about the cruelty and inhumanity of abusing them as men, or rather as animals. Alencastro's second reference concerns the epilogue of the *Rerum per octennium*, consisting of the poem "Mauritia è Brasilia redux" ("Maurits back from Brazil"), written in 1644 and included in the Latin volume. In this poem Barlaeus repeats all his main points and deliberates again upon slavery:

> Why is a man deprived of his rightful liberty and why/ is it in the nature of things that he should suffer slavery? For whoever is human/ is made in the divine image. Born innocent, he rejects violence./ We mortals are all created with equal laws/ and rights;/ but soon injustice, the furor of war/ and savage madness made us unequal (Barlaeus 1647: 339).[3]

These admonishments are remarkable when considered against the assumption that protest against slavery and the slave trade gained ground in the Dutch public opinion only one century later (Paasman 2001: 481). Barlaeus lived through the years in which the Dutch "modernized" international trade by relating it to the Stock Exchange in Amsterdam. We learn from his most famous inauguration speech, *Mercator sapiens* (*Wise merchant*, 1967) on 9 January 1632, that Barlaeus is utterly enthusiastic about the changes in this city. He addressed the city's merchant in his daily preparations for international trade by outlining that Amsterdam was a central point in his global networking. One day earlier, Barlaeus's friend Gerardus Vossius had given another inauguration speech about the utility of history. They were the first professors of philosophy and church history, respectively, appointed to the recently founded Atheneum Illustre. Distinguished men, such as the Mayors Andries Bicker and Jacob de Graeff, who had strongly supported the foundation of this illustrious school, were in their audience.

Bicker and de Graeff were Arminians, one of two poles in the religious bias that divided the United Provinces at that time. The problems originated from a profound disagreement between Franciscus

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emendi vendendique hominem, Dei quantumvis imaginem, à Christo redemptum, imperatorem universi, & nihil minus, quàm naturae ingeniique vitio servum (Barlaeus 1647: 185).

3 *Cur bona libertas homini subduceris? & cur/ Vis servum natura pati? coelestis imago est,/ quisquis homo est, natusque sibi vim respuit insons./ Mortalis aequis generamur legibus omnes,/ Jure pari, mox dissimiles injuria fecit,/ Et belli furor & rabies insana nocendi* (Barlaeus 1647: 339).

Gomarus and Jacobus Arminianus that the eponymous political ideologies resulted (Israel 1998: 420-449). Whereas the Gomarists were the symbol for rigidity and the hard hand in the war against Spain, the Arminians were more inclined toward pacifism and negotiation.

Barlaeus belonged to this last category, and for him, the inauguration of the Athenaeum Illustre was a major event. He certainly knew best how to address the spirit of that moment in history. Van der Woude, the editor of the bilingual edition of *Mercator sapiens* (Barlaeus 1967), argues that in contrast with Vossius's long-forgotten words, Barlaeus's speech struck the essence of the Athenaeum by establishing a link between academic education and business life. This implied that education was not simply reduced to transferring practical concrete knowledge. Rather, it assumed the task of guiding the moral qualities of the student's character in view of his (future) mercantile activities.

Such a noble objective fell into place in a city whose merchants lived intoxicated by the impact of great economic expectations. Barlaeus perceptively grasped this spirit and made it the central topic of his speech. After addressing almighty God, the representatives of the municipal council and the church, the merchants, and the young people in his audience, he explains why he chose his subject: to establish a relationship with the opulent township and to evoke its splendors: "No matter how often I look at your city, which is now also my city, letting my eyes wander over all its beauties and ornaments, I hesitate what to admire first or last!" (Barlaeus 1647: 27).[4]

To further elucidate this vision Barlaeus praises the temples dedicated to God, buildings harboring the poor, towers and lighthouses stretching up through the clouds yet grounding themselves on rotten pine trees, quays constructed along canals, wharfs and hydraulic elevators, the merchant's stock market as well as the curves and arches of the bridges. He continues exalting the beauty of this harbor city with its shops full of merchandise, enormous fleet, and incessant coming and going of people. He cleverly seizes the contrast between the gods of commerce and wealth, Mercury and Pluto, and those of science and

4 *Quoties urbem hanc vestram, jam quoque meam, intueor, et oculos per ejusdem decora omnia et ornamenta circumfero, pendeo animi, quid primum in ea, quid secundum, quid postremum mirari debeam* (Barlaeus 1647: 27).

art, Athens and Apollo, to draw attention to his argument that the Athenaeum offers an equilibrium between opulence and wisdom. Invoking ideals prevalent in antiquity, and to Aristotle and Cicero in particular, Barlaeus assures the public that the Greeks and the Romans were knowledgeable on this matter. They repeatedly asserted that real wisdom lay with showing the virtues of the merchant's activities. To inhibit the vices most reprehensible to him, corruption and dishonesty, Barlaeus recommends valuing the role of experience, conscience, cunning, innovation, power of judgment, as well as dialogue. These virtues become the standard norms for his moral philosophy (borrowed from antiquity), which he distinguishes from the speculative philosophy (practical, concrete, and modern knowledge) comprising geography, natural sciences, astrology, oceanography, mathematics, cartography, and the knowledge of many languages as well as of different cultural habits in a global mercantile network. It allows success in foreign countries, and Amsterdam offers all these indispensable tools, which privileges her above other European cities: "For this reason, I think of Amsterdam as a blessed city, because here the merchant can also be a philosopher and the philosophers can carry on his trade as a merchant" (Barlaeus 1647: 46).[5]

The eloquence and self-confidence of Barlaeus resulted from his auspicious appointment to the Atheneum after considerable obstacles in his professional life. During the National Synod of Dordtrecht in 1618, when he defended his Armenian point of view, the ideals of pacific tolerance were thrown overboard. The Gomarists won and, as a consequence, Barlaeus was dismissed from his public functions as a subregent of the Ecclesiastic College and lost tenure as professor of logic at the University of Leiden. To support his family he resorted to lodging students and giving private lessons. He introduced himself at the stadtholder's court in The Hague by writing Latin verses about heroic facts in the republic. Barlaeus loved experimenting with an elegant, learned style and equating events from antiquity with contemporary occurrences. He frequented humanist circles through which

5 *Quae cum ita sint, beatam hanc Amstelodamensium rempub. puto, in qua jam mercatoribus philosophari, et philosophis mercari concessum* (Barlaeus 1647: 46).

he came into contact with other learned men such as Pieter Cornelis Hooft and Constantijn Huygens (Horst 1978).

This humanist orientation is the crux of Barlaeus's discourse contrasting the vanity of material wealth on the one hand with wisdom, the constant value of divine wealth. He strengthens his argument by pointing to the frequent rise and fall of capital accumulations in contrast with the permanent role of wisdom in human history. Barlaeus is not against the race for profit because this conforms to natural law. But this law needs regulation through wisdom displayed when the merchant practices a moral codex reminding him of virtues such as honesty, loyalty, hospitality, prudence, generosity, and civil service to the community. In Barlaeus's opinion this moral codex would be put in circulation by using coins stamped with the symbols of these virtues, whose instructions are administered by the Athenaeum founded by the Amsterdam municipality. Barlaeus expresses the hope that it will succeed in conducting the ship of destiny with a secure hand to the haven.

Fifteen years later, in his *Rerum per octennium,* Barlaeus recalls his inaugural speech. He obviously perceives a link because he remarks that this time he has to eliminate his main addressee, the almighty God, and speaks about situations and people who actually exist. He notes that this gives him less freedom of expression. In his dedicatory to Johan Maurits, Barlaeus immediately points to the mercantile goals:

> You continued overseas what you had accomplished in this country. There, as here, you devoted your military service to freedom and religion, to your country and the church, to the well being of mankind and the wishes of merchants. On these two occasions you honored the glory of the United Provinces (Barlaeus 1647: Dedication).[6]

The text praises the count's famous success in battle and evokes his ability for building fortresses, castles, and cities that capture the admiration and the astonishment of the "barbarous". The port cities of Luanda and Mauritsstad/Recife are particularly important. Frans Post included two oversized (in comparison to the other engravings) city views of Luanda and Mauritsstad/Recife, respectively, in Barlaeus's

6 *Quod dudum feceras domi, factum à te foris. nempe ut arma commodares Libertati & Religioni, Patriae & Ecclesiae, hominum saluti & mercantium cupiditati. utrumque Foederatorum gloriae* (Barlaeus 1647: Dedication).

volume. Meanwhile, Barlaeus briefly describes Luanda, conquered by the Dutch in 1641, but emphasizes the newly built Mauritsstad as the symbol of Dutch superiority: "Let the destruction of Olinda be measured against the building of MAURITSSTAD in your honor" (Barlaeus 1647: Dedication).[7]

To illustrate the impact of Dutch splendor in Brazil, Barlaeus extensively describes the former richness of Olinda, capital of Portuguese-held Pernambuco:

> I have heard from a trustworthy source that in one day forty ships loaded with sugar sailed from Olinda's harbor, while this same quantity, enough to lead forty more ships, remained in the warehouse (Barlaeus 1647: 41).[8]

The magnificence of Olinda's past manifests itself in descriptions of its ecclesiastical buildings, which, in Barlaeus's opinion, should be rebuilt in the future. Notwithstanding his conciliatory tone, these opinions underscore the contrast of Olinda in ruins, destroyed by the Dutch, with the present magnificence of Mauritsstad in front of the harbor Recife, with its bridges, horticulture, palaces, scientific planning, and commercial activities. Barlaeus extols the achievements of Johan Maurits:

> He annexed the island Antonio Vaz through a dike with fort Frederick built in a pentagon form. The swamps and the shrubs of this space caused creeping flesh so that it needed a superhuman belief to think that a city could be built there. But although it seemed impossible, we believe that due to Nassau's industry and courage he succeeded, even when nature forbad it, to proceed with skill and art (Barlaeus 1647: 146).[9]

That Barlaeus was fascinated with America is supported by his biographer Worp (1885-1889), who reports that Barlaeus owned 27 books about traveling to the West Indies in his personal library in Leiden.

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7 *Proponatur in conspicuo ruentis Olindae facies & surgentis in laudes tuas MAURITIAE* (Barlaeus 1647: Dedication).

8 *Non vanis autoribus habeo, uno die ex Olindae portu solvisse naves saccharo onustas quadraginta, relicta adhuc in conditoriis ea sacchari copia, quae ad totidem navium vecturam satis esset* (Barlaeus 1647: 41).

9 *Insulam Antonii Vazii, Frederici castro quinquangulari, vallo annexuit. quod spacium omne stagnis interfusis & arbustis horrebat, ut supra humanam fidem fuerit, urbem illic condi posse. At nunc conditam esse, Nassovii industriâ, oculati credimos. utpote cui ingenium & audacia erat, etiam quae natura prohibuisset, per artem & laboris tentare* (Barlaeus 1647: 146).

This interest in America was a general phenomenon in Barlaeus's days, and he contributed by translating the first volume of the general history of the New World by Antonio de Herrera, the official chronicler of the king of Spain, into Latin in 1622. In contrast to Herrera, though, Barlaeus describes the American continent from a humanist point of view stressing its novelty in comparison with antiquity, whose authors could not report on that part of the world. He remarks that Olinda, Pernambuco, Mauritiopolis, or Tamarica replace Cartago, Rom, Latium, or Gallia, and enemies of war are now known as Tapuyas, Nariquites, Petivares, Caribes, Chileans, and Peruvians.

Barlaeus underlines the emergence of this New World that cannot but arouse the restless spirit of the merchant whose

> [...] mind is given to restlessness. No amount of good fortune can come his way or pursue him so completely that it satisfies his wishes. Finding faults for which he can blame his assistants becomes second nature. While chasing his expectations, he wants at the same time to have all his wishes already satisfied (Barlaeus 1647: 199).[10]

The delight of Brazil, for Barlaeus, lies in its sugar, the apotheosis of taste. His poem, "Triumphus super capta Olinda, Pernambuci urbe, Brasiliae Metropoli" (The Triumph of Having Conquered Olinda, the City in Pernambuco, the Metropolis of Brazil) of 1630 ends with the reference to the "yearly obtained sugar from excellent canes" (Barlaeus 1660: 247).[11] And in "Maurits è Brasilia redux", the author finds pleasure in "its very sweet sugar ... secretly touching our hand" (Barlaeus 1647: 335).[12] After a long treatise on sugar production in general, Barlaeus finally reveals his personal predilection for it: "But the sweetness of sugar makes me drool, moistening the pages of this nar-

10 *Inquieta res est mercantium animus. nunquam illi tam plenè occurrere & obsequi ulla fortuna potest, quae vota exsatiet. Facilè invenit, quod amplitudinis suae curatoribus imputet. ac dum suas spes anteire parat, vellet confectum, quicquid animus destinavit* (Barlaeus 1647: 199).

11 "[...] annuaque excelsis extundi saccharra cannis (Barlaeus, Triumphus super capta Olinda, Pernambuci urbe, Brasiliae Metropoli". In: *Barlaei Poemata. Pars 1*, 1660: 247).

12 [...] *sua sacchara nostras/ Laetatur tractare manus dulcissima tellus* (Barlaeus 1647: 335).

rative with saliva when I compare the sugar of antiquity with ours" (1647: 71).[13]

He is quick to add that this delectable sugar is impossible to produce without the toils of Africans.

For Barlaeus, therefore, the delight of Brazil is intrinsically linked to sugar consumption, underlying the commercial spirit of the Baroque. It corresponds with the citizens who are also consumers in Rama's so-called "artificial urban enclaves" in America, and Barlaeus provides their merchants with a moral codex. The scientific advances that inform his speculative philosophy permit him a feeling of superiority over his counterparts in antiquity as well as over the Iberians. For example, according to Barlaeus, Georg Markgraf's method of measuring the solar eclipse in Recife was more advanced in comparison with observations in Spanish America. Or, in his opinion, the assertions of Arias Montanus that the ships of Salomon had crossed the ocean are false because this king never would have been able to do that without help of the *magnetica directione*. Loyal to his Zeitgeist, Barlaeus also documents the plants and animals in Brazil. This part of his text does not seem to be very convincing, though. More precise information is available from other sources, which explains why Whitehead and Boeseman (1989) hardly mention Barlaeus in their book on Dutch seventeenth-century Brazil.

There is another aspect of this modern speculative philosophy, pointed out by Alencastro among others, as belonging to the colonial strategy of *divide et impera*, and that is the attitude toward the African American and Amerindian populations. The *Rerum per octennium* contains many pages describing habits of Africans *(nigrita Loanda)*, Amerindians *(nomadum Tapuya)*, and Chileans *(Araucanos)*. These ethnographic notations were traditionally included in European early modern history writing about countries overseas and responded to the exigency of allying with these native inhabitants if Europeans were to maintain and strengthen their position on the coasts and the sea routes to America. Simultaneously, however, these contacts raise the most precarious question of what remains of Barlaeus's actual stance in the

13 *At mota mihi sacchari dulcedine salivâ, non alienum fuerit, eodem succo adspergere narrationis hujus paginas, & veterum sacchara cum novis conferre* (Barlaeus 1647: 71).

debates surrounding slavery and the slave trade in relationship with the non-European population.

We have seen that Barlaeus's rhetoric was critical of slavery. Through his discussions with the count and daily contact with his students, many of whom were involved in overseas trade and diligently followed financial reports, Barlaeus must have been aware of the increased involvement in the slave trade. In this respect his report on the 1643 expedition to Chile in *Rerum per octennium* acquires a surprising dimension. He first mentions the Company's plan to occupy Buenos Aires and enable overland travel to Peru, thereby accessing Potosi, the rich silver mine. Notwithstanding its clear objectives, this plan did not materialize, and a second plan was established. A secret military expedition was sent from Texel to Recife under the command of Admiral Hendrik Brouwer. The ships departed from there to sail to Valdivia, and the long and detailed description of this expedition at the end of Barlaeus's book documents its relevance.

Barlaeus reproduces the instructions of the administrators of the West India Company. Brouwer's first task was to inform the Chilean chiefs that the Dutch were combating the Spaniards as bravely and successfully as they themselves had done. As a show of good faith, Brouwer also brought them letters from the prince of Orange and the States General with the invitation to come to Holland and study the country's buildings, markets, and government and thus to seal their friendship with mercantile relationships. The chiefs of the Arauco, Tucapel, and Purén were the first to be addressed because they lived closest to Valdivia in the area with the most gold and fertile soil.

After Brouwer's death, his assistant Elias Herckmans was appointed leader of the expedition and continued the negotiations. Barlaeus speaks favorably of Herckmans, the "poet-adventurer" who had written a book about maritime expeditions. He informed the chiefs that the happiness of merchants in Holland would be complete when they extracted minerals. Naturally, this upset the Araucans, who still remembered the cruelty of the Spaniards when they were forced to extract gold for them. According to Barlaeus, the chiefs proposed that the Dutch do this job themselves. Alternatively, the Chileans recommended they attack Lima, Arica, and other Spanish cities. The Peruvians, like the Chileans, craved liberation from the Spaniards and would support Herckmans's claim to the silver of Potosí. Herckmans, how-

ever, confronted with the threat of mutiny among his men, decided to return to Recife. Barlaeus reproduces the Chilean chief's propositions to retain Herckmans. In fact, they insisted on supporting the extraction of minerals in their territory "when caved by Africans", and Barlaeus repeats this argument:

> They [the Dutch] were urged to return with renewed energy and courage, to continue where they had left off. They should bring Africans to work in the mines and they were promised support for this enterprise (Barlaeus 1647: 281).[14]

That Barlaeus does not give any critical comment on this proposal is striking. He seems to disconnect it completely from his philosophical remorse that has been pointed out above. How can this be understood? Does the moral codex only apply to the level of the "dream of an order", whereas reality contradicts its Christian horizon? Even if it is not clear what the Chileans themselves actually might have said, Barlaeus reproduces their proposal without further comment.

Barlaeus's interpretation of the encounter with the Chilean chiefs might express that, for him, moral philosophy means that, as a Christian, slavery and the slave trade must be judged immoral because they are unnatural. Hence, Barlaeus seems to recognize that the work in America cannot be done without the Africans and that the only ones who can say this freely are their "rivals", the Amerindians. To negotiate this deal, knowledge of their customs, language, and habits belongs to the realm of speculative philosophy, to the practical knowledge for mercantile Christian purposes. Apparently, Barlaeus judges that Christians cannot approve such things publicly, although that this logic does not apply to heathens. They are different, as we learn from his observation when speaking of the sweetness of sugar: "And it is really astonishing that the barbarians do not wish to cook their food and continue having wild and rude customs, even when they eat nectar and ambrosia" (Barlaeus 1647: 71).[15]

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14 *Hortabantur, ut redirent novisque viribus & animis restaurarent coepta, Nigritas secum eruendis fodinis adducerent, ipsos non defore ista agentibus* (Barlaeus 1647: 281).

15 *Et mirum sanè, tam miti alimento non desaevire barbariem, & durare morum asperitatem ferociamque, pastis hoc nectare & ambrosia* (Barlaeus 1647: 71).

2. Early modern myths in contemporary narratives of Angola and Brazil

Taking into account the formation of this "double consciousness" in early modern history, the question remains whether the bias in Barlaeus's moral and speculative philosophy continues having its effects in contemporary literature. We have seen that Amsterdam's moral codex was the main addressee in Barlaeus's *Mercator sapiens*, whereas Luanda and especially Mauritsstad/Recife are central in *Rerum per octennium* as Atlantic port cities and main agencies for the Dutch trade overseas. For this purpose, however, the non-Christian "barbarians" were removed to the practical level of speculative philosophy with some "contact zones" (Pratt 1992) concerning the moral philosophy of urbanized Christian merchants. These links are discussed in three recent novels written by authors from Angola and Brazil. These novels relate to this merchant mentality of the seventeenth century in Recife, Luanda, and Rio de Janeiro. Their urban environments are connected to mythological personalities of that time: Queen Nzinga and Zumbi, legendary because of their heroic strategic warfare. How do these authors relate to the slave trade and its practical and ideological needs from a contemporary point of view?

The authors draw their plots around the two national heroes of Angola and Brazil. Queen Nzinga Mbandi lived from 1582 to 1663, constantly at war with the Portuguese. The legends of her cruelty and eccentricity originate from historical Christian interpretations, which branded her behavior as barbarian notwithstanding her conversion to Christianity. One particular episode has vividly survived in oral and written reports. In the name of her brother, King Ngola Mani a Ngola, Nzinga visited Luanda in the early 1620s for peace negotiations and was received with all the honors dictated by the conventions of international diplomacy. Unfortunately, during the conversations with the Portuguese governor João Correia de Sousa in his palace, no seat was offered to her while he was seated in an armchair. Unflustered, Nzinga ordered one of her slaves to cower down and serve her as a stool, thereby preserving her honor and self-esteem. Martin Lienhard (2005) shows how precarious this matter of asymmetrical seating was, which explains even more Nzinga's ability to negotiate a treaty face to face and on equal terms.

Few Brazilians are unfamiliar with Zumbi, whose uncle, Nganga Zumbi, was the king of Palmares at the time of Zumbi's birth there in 1655. Barlaeus also reported on the existence of Palmares and on the plans of attacking this *quilombo* or settlement of escaped slaves, fugitive whites, and indigenous people in the interior, which is said to have had more than 30,000 inhabitants. Soon after his birth Zumbi was kidnapped by the Portuguese and given to a Catholic priest for his education. He escaped and returned to Palmares in 1670. Because of his extraordinary gift for strategy, Zumbi became king in 1680, when the settlement was regularly attacked by Portuguese military expeditions and destroyed after a long siege in 1695. Zumbi escaped that attack but was captured and killed some time later.

These legendary personalities play a crucial role in the three contemporary novels written by Pepetela from Angola, the Brazilian Alberto Mussa, and José Eduardo Agualusa, also from Angola. Pepetela, the name of the first author, means "eyelash" in Umbundu and is the *nom de guerre* of Artur Carlos Maurício Pestana dos Santos, born in Benguela in 1941. He fought against Portuguese colonialism, then occupied positions in the republican government and became professor of sociology at the University Agostinho Neto. *A Gloriosa Família* (*The Glorious Family*, 1997) is his ninth novel and spans the so-called Dutch period in Angola from 1641 to 1648. Pepetela was obviously inspired by historical research from Brazil because the subtitle *O tempo dos flamengos (The Time of the Flemish)* of his novel is copied from José Antônio Gonsalves de Mello's standard work on the Dutch period (1947). Pepetela also quotes from other sources such as the *História geral das guerras angolanas* (*General History of the Wars in Angola*, 1689) written by Antônio de Oliveira Cadornega, a Portuguese chronicler who appears as himself in the novel.

The plot is organized around the lives of the members of the influential van Dum family of Flemish-Angolan origin. They are traders and farmers, or better yet, entrepreneurs. The domestic slave of the patriarch Baltasar van Dum is the main narrative voice. Born mute and without a name of his own, he follows his master everywhere as a shadow and constantly meditates on his own situation. The reader learns that he is the son of an Angolan slave and a Neapolitan missionary at the court of Queen Nzinga in Matamba, located in the interior. Therefore, he knows the situation in the *kimbos* (villages) and the

mato (forest and savanna) from his own experience. In Luanda the coastal zone is his permanent companion. He visits the island in the bay or overlooks the Atlantic from the height of his master's property. The ocean connects with Brazil, the most important export market for van Dum, and Brazil is a frequent subject of discussion in Baltasar's permanent conversations with family members, friends, colleagues, and functionaries.

This slave (and his master) meet Barlaeus, who in Pepetela's interpretation traveled with Johan Maurits to Recife and is now on his way back to Amsterdam via Luanda in the company of Georg Markgraf, the German astrologist who died in Angola. Pepetela's fictional Barlaeus is a painter of land and city views, as was Frans Post, who illustrated the 1647 book of the real Barlaeus. This fictional Barlaeus explains to the slave and his master the details of modern landscape painting while depicting the view of Luanda on the beach during his stay in Angola. Luanda is so omnipresent in Pepetela's narrative that the reader can possibly draw the map of its streets, buildings, and natural environment from the information given in the text.

The novel ends when the Brazilians recapture Luanda from the Dutch in August 1648. But the slave storyteller does not exactly welcome them as liberators and reports the events in a rather critical tone. It is general knowledge that General Salvador Correia de Sá is the descendant of a prominent family from Rio de Janeiro, including governors and captains among their members. The general is also a bigot who, upon arrival in Luanda, unpacks a portable altar to celebrate Mass. Everybody was obliged to be present, but Salvador de Sá is seemingly uninterested in the well-being of these believers. The afternoon of this day of liberation is even characterized as tragic because another of the general's official acts is to order the burning of every "demonic Calvinist" document in the city. Within the flames of this fire, all the plans for the eventual improvement of the infrastructure of the city are consumed. The domestic slave (presumably voicing Pepetela's views) apparently does not consider colonial warfare synonymous with liberation.

The second author is Alberto Mussa, born in Rio de Janeiro in 1961, who takes his readers even further back in time in *O trono da rainha Jinga* (*The Throne of Queen Nzinga*, 1999). It is Mussa's first novel and received much attention when it was announced as the first

of a series of five novels about Rio de Janeiro. In 25 short chapters the writer includes fragments of the life of Mendo Antunes, a Portuguese. Through them the reader learns that Antunes establishes himself first in Goa in 1609, where he trades with the people in the interior, fears the Arab and Spanish competition, and encounters the practices of the Brahman religion. From Goa he leaves for Angola in 1612 and enters the slave business, for which he presents himself at the court of Queen Nzinga. Again, he observes the unusual customs at this court with astonishment. Finally, in 1623 he arrives in the Brazil under General Auditor Gonçalo Unhão Dinis. This part of Antunes's life is told in retrospect because Mussa organizes the chronology around the next three years, during which strange things occur in Rio de Janeiro. The city map as such, however, does not occupy a relevant position in Mussa's book; its environment is indicated only through the action of the characters in various houses and streets in and outside the actual urban nucleus.

For the third author, José Eduardo Agualusa, in contrast, the urban environment of Rio belongs to a realistic as well as imaginative semiotic construction around the whereabouts and the meeting places of his characters: Favela Morro da Barriga, Market of San Christopher, Motel Carinhoso, Rodrigo de Freitas Lagoon, Hotel Glória, Botanical Garden, Galeão Airport, Restaurant Yoruba, and Portuguese Hospital, to name a few. Luanda, with its Beer Bar Biker in particular, also appears as the site of action. Agualusa was born in Huambo in 1960 and lives as a writer and journalist in Lisbon and Angola. He also stayed in Recife and Rio, where the action takes place in *O ano em que Zumbi tomou o Rio* (*The Year that Zumbi Took Rio*, 2002). Two black Angolans identify with armed resistance in the *favela* Morro da Barriga, led by a Black Commando. This Commando consists of a small group of militant black youngsters that rebel against social injustice and discrimination in Brazil. Agualusa, who published his book in April 2002, depicts Lula as president, who renounces his position to protest the intervention of the army. He therefore situates himself on the side of the Black Commando, followers of Zumbi, the legendary hero of Palmares. They all adhere to the message in the text of a popular, provocative rap song, "Preto de Nascença" ("Born Black"), which relates the metamorphosis of the docile black Brazilian into a Zumbi. Not only the title of Agualusa's novel, but these repeated allusions to Pal-

mares and its historical settings indicate the omnipresence of this myth in the plot.

It is evident that all three contemporary authors refer to myths that date back to the seventeenth century. The role of Queen Nzinga in Angola and Brazil even plays a central role in Pepetela's and Mussa's novels. Pepetela also evokes the positive memory of the Dutch period in regard to the necessary improvements to Luanda's infrastructure as well as recognition of the role played by art and science in urban life (Phaf-Rheinberger 2004). However, the author's principal motif is the criticism of slavery. Pepetela's domestic servant, whose descent is intrinsically linked to Queen Nzinga's court, certainly does not live in the shadow of the text: he is the novel's main character. Van Dum received him as a gift from the queen when Baltasar first introduced himself to her. Therefore, this slave knows every detail of van Dum's enterprises from its very beginnings, and though illiterate and mute, he has an adequate interpretation for everything he observes. Furthermore, his centrality to the text is brought to the fore in that he was one of the queen's most precious properties. He was bestowed upon Baltasar as a token of her confidence that a Fleming or, rather, a Dutchman would be a loyal partner in negotiations against the Portuguese. But, as the slave knows, Baltasar deceived the queen as he secretly discusses his affairs with both colonial partners.

Pepetela's slave questions slavery and the unreliability of colonial merchants in the form of a historical novel, which contains substantial actual information on that time. Whereas Queen Nzinga's famous chair scene forms merely one of many memories of his slave storyteller and does not play a special role, Mussa recalls it in the title of his novel and presents it as a crucial episode in the organization of his plot. His main character, Mendo Antunes, personally witnesses it in Luanda. Shortly afterwards he goes to Rio, where a secret brotherhood of African slaves, *irmandade*, has been poisoning white Portuguese, killing them during robberies, or setting their prisoners free. The leader of this brotherhood is a woman, following the example of Queen Nzinga. In his affinity with this queen, and therefore with the *irmandade*, lies the clue to Mussa's work.

The two Angolan characters in Agualusa's plot are the elegantly dressed colonel Francisco Palmares and the dwarfish, homosexual Euclides Matoso da Câmara, a radio and television reporter. In Rio the

colonel sells weapons to the Black Commando and joins the struggle against (what he calls) the colonization of black people in Brazil. Agualusa refers to the assassination of eight street children by police on 23 July 1993 near the Church of Nossa Senhora da Candelária in Rio. This massacre, which was known worldwide, lies at the base of Agualusa's narrative protest against such abuses of state power. Moreover, he claims that it is the result of the enslavement of black people that continues to have an impact in Brazil. Agualusa maintains that, first, a Portuguese prince declared independence for a country that was thereafter always governed by whites and in which black Brazilians were assigned to and still generally occupy the lowest level of the social hierarchy. His Black Commando is the personification of the armed resistance against this history of black submission, finding supporters at all levels of Brazilian society.

Criticism, subversion, and armed resistance against (the consequences of) slavery on all levels of daily life are thus the main motifs for the logic of the three narrations. For Pepetela, Luanda, with its European influences and visits from or trade with Brazil, obtains coherence through the bonds of the slave (and his master) with the interior, intertwining with members of the van Dum family, the "contact zone" between black and white. The slave understands that the family's behavior is sometimes imposed from outside (i.e., is white) and sometimes reflects local custom (i.e., is black). His owner, Baltasar, emigrated from Flanders in 1616 and married a woman from an indigenous aristocratic family. This woman speaks mostly Kimbundu at home to her children and servants. Many of them belong to the biological category of mulatto, but the storyteller barely mentions this word and prefers formulating other criteria for describing social allegiances. At the end of the book, Pepetela describes a discussion about mulattos between the ambassador of the king of Congo and the Dutch director Ouman. The latter argues that the Portuguese are creating unnatural monsters by having children with native women, whereas the Mani Congo responds that the Dutch also seem to have a similar custom. Obviously, Pepetela avoids the impression that societal divisions operate along the color line, trying to bring in as many inside views as possible. For this purpose he recounts the drama of one of the van Dum's daughters who felt in love with a slave. This man was

killed for this "crime", and nobody did anything to hinder or revenge this assassination.

Pepetela's seventeenth-century Angola shows a more differential environment than a community bluntly divided into black and white camps. It is ironic that the Brazilian author Mussa does not rely on such categories. Instead, he designs his chronology by juxtaposing the chapters of various speaking voices without identifying the speaker or defining the relationship between the voices beforehand. Meanwhile, through them Mussa testifies to the existence of a mysterious manuscript in the Kimbundu language that speaks of slaughter: "Bravo, the devil arrived. He killed father; he killed mother; he killed uncle; he killed nephew; he killed a blind man falling down; a cripple on the road" (Mussa 1999: 9).[16]

In the course of the book, these Kimbundu verses turn out to be a canto for initiation rites and the swearing of eternal loyalty to the *irmandade* in correspondence with the customs in Matamba as well as in Rio. In the first half of Mussa's novel, therefore, the suspense builds around the question of which narrating voice might be involved in this secret organization. The suspense dissolves only after narrating Queen Nzinga's human throne scene, and it becomes clear that everyone in Rio who has been in Angola is initiated. Antunes, the Portuguese ship owner and friend of the highest Portuguese representatives in town, is just as much incorporated in this circle as the Africans or African Brazilians, which erases the ethnic and cultural hierarchy between these sectors of Brazilian society.

Antunes's secretary turns out to be the missing link. He is an unusually educated man of Arab descent who was bought in Salvador da Bahia. He has a Christian name, Inácio, and only at the end of the book it is revealed that he possesses a Kimbundu name as well, Camundele. He is obviously the author of the mysterious manuscript. Through this character the author constructs a complex familiarity – he calls it friendship – between the writing culture of "heathens" and Christians, who are both represented in the secret brotherhood. The question of whose criteria are appropriate is not raised. Mussa is concerned with demonstrating the subversive force of a Kimbundu soci-

16 *Múcua njinda / cariapemba uabixe/ uajibe tata uajibe mama/ uajibe dilemba uajibe muebo/ uajibe quitumba bunjila/ ni dicata buquicoca* (Mussa 1999: 9).

ety in Rio in those times of violence, in which the representatives of the *irmandade* achieve equality in Christian society.

Angola in Brazil is also the theme of Agualusa, as we have seen above. He works with paradoxes and hyperbole to emphasize controversial positions. In his descriptions of personal relationships, Agualusa is aware of the impact of various shades of skin color and corporal or sexual differences in personal relationships. In the political arena, however, such sensitive gradations are not reflected in the author's position that the Afro-Brazilians have not yet freed themselves from colonialism. It is the decisive motif for the armed resistance of the Black Commando. The author suggests remuneration for damages inflicted upon the communal black spirit in the form of a symbolic reward for all Brazilians of African origin and a public excuse for centuries of exploitation and oppression. He argues for the introduction of a system of quotas for Afro-Brazilians to prevent insufficient representation (less than 40 percent) in universities, public service, or the army.

Agualusa's story is framed in a circular structure and informs the reader from the very beginning that it will not have a happy ending. The colonel and the journalist have died in Angola at the start anew of the civil war after the elections in November 1992 but are resurrected in Rio in 2002 to assist in the battle there. Just as with the *quilombo* Palmares, military forces intervene here and destroy the powerful Black Commando in the *favela* Morro da Barriga. Its leader is killed and immediately transformed into a legendary hero. The two Angolans have different destinies. Loyal to his last name, Colonel Palmares fights until the end, and although he is the real hero of the story, Agualusa does not tell the story of a hero. Rather, he compares his fate with that of Peter Pan with a twist: the colonel is forever tied to violent scenarios. As a reporter and political journalist, the other Angolan character, Euclides, performs a different role by constantly referring to the traumatic events in Luanda. It is impossible to eliminate those memories, and this truth is apparently as relevant as the recent occurrences in Rio.

The exaggerated fragmentation of the narrative codes increases the feeling of affinity nurtured by the omnipresence of music and literature. Agualusa quotes singers such as Caetano Veloso, Chico Buarque de Holanda, Maria Bethânia, Zeca Baleiro, Martinho da Vila, or rap-

per MV Bill. Their contributions are just as important as those of poets Lídia do Camo Ferreira, Aldir Blanc, Ruy Knopfly, António Risério, Olavo Bilac, Noel Rosa, Lya Luft, Ferreira Gullar, and Nuno Júdice. By way of these references Agualusa's novel resembles a hymn to poetry and music in Brazil and Portuguese Africa. They all coincide in a celebration of the word "black" at the end, reproduced in the languages to which Agualusa has access: *fekete, negro, grunho, bumbo, swart, sort, zwart, schwartz, musta, nègre, prieto, burakku* (Agualusa 2000: 273). This verbal apotheosis takes place in Hotel Gellert in post-communist Budapest in an art deco setting, where Euclides finds himself, in expectation of better times, after the destruction of the Black Commando. Obviously, the color black has an outstanding significance.

3. Concluding remarks

To sum up, we have shown that Barlaeus, Pepetela, Mussa, and Agualusa provide a comparative perspective on Angola and Brazil. All of them stress the asymmetrical hierarchies that reign in (former) slave societies. These works are part of Rama's model of the lettered cities, as I have argued, shifting its center to the South Atlantic. They concentrate on urban port environments on both sides of the ocean, these doorways of the trade between Africa and America. The authors' rhetorical inquiries take up the "double consciousness" of modernity that Paul Gilroy (1993) wrote about, but now with its roots in the mercantile philosophy. Barlaeus describes its mechanisms in the seventeenth century in his *Rerum per octennium in Brasilia*, whereas the contemporary writers denounce the complex control mechanisms through which they are maintained. For that purpose, they embody them in the characters of the slaves in colonial society or of the inhabitants of a *favela* in present-day Rio de Janeiro. Especially Agualusa's literary techniques of paradoxes, an overflow of stereotypes, ambiguity and hyperbole are reminiscent of a similar pattern in Carlos Fuentes's novel *Christopher Unborn* (1990) or in Luis Rafael Sánchez's fabulation *La importancia de llamarse Daniel Santos* (1988). These Spanish-American writers equally discuss the role of popular music, in their case the bolero, as a unifying force in an increasingly fragmented

urban scenario, as Agualusa does with the rap song "Preto de Nascença".

Pepetela, Mussa, and Agualusa's novels all denounce slavery and its consequences as a criminal practice. Their moral codex for justice is conceived within the horizon of "myths", which has its roots in the seventeenth century, of Queen Nzinga in Angola and Zumbi de Palmares in Brazil. Both these myths are national symbols of resistance and survival of their respective countries. The materiality of the author's narrative environments of Rio de Janeiro and Luanda is different from Barlaeus's portrait of Luanda and Mauritsstad/Recife. Barlaeus's treatise emphasizes natural sciences, geography, mapping, linguistics, and anthropology, supporting the function of urban constructions in the service of Dutch overseas expansion. In contemporary fiction the authors display the details of daily life in the port cities of the former South Atlantic route and question the concept of democracy in their fictional realities. The burdens of the past are still influential and it appears that more literary works addressing this problem in the lusophone world are forthcoming. The recently published novel *Um defeito de cor* (*A Defect of Color*, 2007) by Ana Maria Gonçalves, for example, discusses the transatlantic connections between the kingdom of Dahomey and Salvador de Bahia in the nineteenth century. She treats gender issues in more depth and once again underscores the demand for staging slavery conditions in times of post-colonial globalization because, obviously, it is necessary to inquire whether they are still operative today.

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